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SUBJECT: German Government Welcomes Zoellick
World Bank Nomination

REF: SECSTATE 73691

¶1. Germany welcomed President Bush's May 30 nomination of Robert Zoellick to be President of the World Bank. On behalf of Chancellor Merkel (CDU), Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidi Wieczorek-Zeul (SPD), praised the choice and described Zoellick as a "good candidate who would come to the World Bank with a high degree of international experience." She added that Germany would look forward to "dialogue with [Zoellick] and the other representatives of the World Bank on the future of the institution and the challenges it faces." Wieczorek-Zeul specifically mentioned the fight against poverty, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and efforts to combat climate change as issues facing the next World Bank president. Recently, the Development Minister, who also serves as Germany's World Bank Governor, stressed that Germany would look to the Bank to take active steps on new debt relief initiatives for African countries.

¶2. Press reports indicate that Zoellick's nomination received strong public support from German Finance Minister Peer Steinbrueck (SPD). Contacts in the Minister's office privately confirmed to Emboff that Steinbrueck had responded favorably to requests from many European ambassadors in Berlin who had sought his assessment. The Foreign Ministry additionally welcomed the nomination. Karsten Voigt, the Ministry's Coordinator for German-U.S. relations, praised the announcement in press interviews. (Note: MFA contacts privately informed Emboff that the government plans to emphasize publicly that Zoellick is one of the few U.S. recipients of the Federal President's Cross of Merit, Star Class ("Bundesverdienstkreuz mit Stern") -- the nation's most prestigious award. End note.)

¶3. Wieczorek-Zeul's warm welcome to Zoellick comes in the wake of her harsh criticism of

outgoing World Bank President Wolfowitz. Wieczorek-Zeul took a public stance against Wolfowitz remaining at the helm of the World Bank following allegations of ethical misconduct. In recent weeks, she used numerous public fora to emphasize the need she saw for strong leadership at the top of the institution which she felt Wolfowitz could no longer guarantee. On May 16, Wieczorek-Zeul publicly announced that she had effectively rescinded his invitation to the G-8/World Bank forum later that month in Berlin.

TIMKEN JR.